



# Health Ministers Meeting (HMM): *Communique* **16 August 2024 - Sydney**

## **Joint Health and Mental Health Ministers' Meeting Communique**

Health and Mental Health Ministers met today to discuss the key issues affecting Australia's mental health system and explored options for further reform.

This followed an initial discussion in April 2024 to discuss the Bondi Junction Westfield incident and calls from the mental health sector, as well as the ways in which jurisdictions can work better together to improve mental health care.

Ministers thank Mental Health Australia, the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance, Mental Health Carers Australia and the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials Group Lived Experience Members for providing statements to inform discussions. Ministers acknowledged their tireless advocacy of the mental health and suicide prevention sector and those with lived and living experience.

### **Key priorities discussed at the Joint Health and Mental Health Ministers' Session:**

#### *Mental Health Reform*

Ministers discussed the current mental health reform landscape and agreed an approach for reforms, focussed on achieving an effective and equitable mental health system.

Governments will continue to work together to improve access to mental health services across Australia through a re-affirmed commitment to delivering on the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (National Agreement).

Ministers committed to meeting twice a year to continue to progress reform priorities and for the next forum to focus on child and youth mental health and consider reform to address unmet needs. This meeting will include sector participation, including those with lived and living experience.

All governments have re-committed to ensuring lived and living experience is embedded in the design and implementation of mental health and suicide prevention initiatives.

#### *Psychosocial Supports*

Ministers discussed the critical importance of psychosocial supports as part of a holistic support system for people experiencing moderate to severe mental illness. Ministers agreed to release the [\*Analysis of unmet need for psychosocial supports outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme - Final Report\*](#). Ministers agreed to work with mental health stakeholders, including lived experience and First Nations, to develop a robust plan for future psychosocial support arrangements. This will be done in the context of continuing work on a renewed National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement and ongoing National Disability Insurance Scheme reform. This work will build on reforms already undertaken to ensure those with the most severe mental health needs have access to supports in the community.

### *Increasing Demand and Workforce Shortfall*

Ministers discussed workforce challenges in the mental health system in the context of continuing increased demand. Ministers agreed the Commonwealth will undertake a national data and information monitoring project to inform how to grow and retain the mental health and suicide prevention workforce. Governments will work collectively to understand the effectiveness of workforce attraction and retention initiatives and explore innovative models of delivering multidisciplinary care in locations of need. This will continue to implement government priorities which have been agreed under the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022-2032*.

### *Child and Youth Mental Health*

Ministers considered the challenges experienced by children and young people (0-25) causing a decline in their mental health.

Ministers agreed child and youth mental health and wellbeing is a priority across governments and there is an ongoing need to identify opportunities to address the declining mental health of our children and young people.

Ministers agreed to task officials to undertake an analysis of the effectiveness of current programs and identify opportunities for better integration across Mental health service providers and education, and to report back to the next meeting.

### *Mutual Recognition, Improving Co-ordination and Information Sharing*

Australia does not have a national scheme for the mutual recognition of civil mental health orders made across jurisdictions. Ministers agreed in-principle to the need for locally appropriate legislative or administrative changes to enable the Mutual Recognition of Mental Health Orders.

Ministers reviewed interstate linkages and cross-border arrangements, including information sharing and legislation. Ministers agreed to develop a national framework to improve interjurisdictional information sharing. In developing this framework, consideration will be given to each jurisdiction's respective privacy laws and addressing challenges or barriers to information sharing across jurisdictions, when it is appropriate for this to occur.